Volume 18 No. 10 February 2008

TRUTH ABOUT POWER IS SPOKEN HERE
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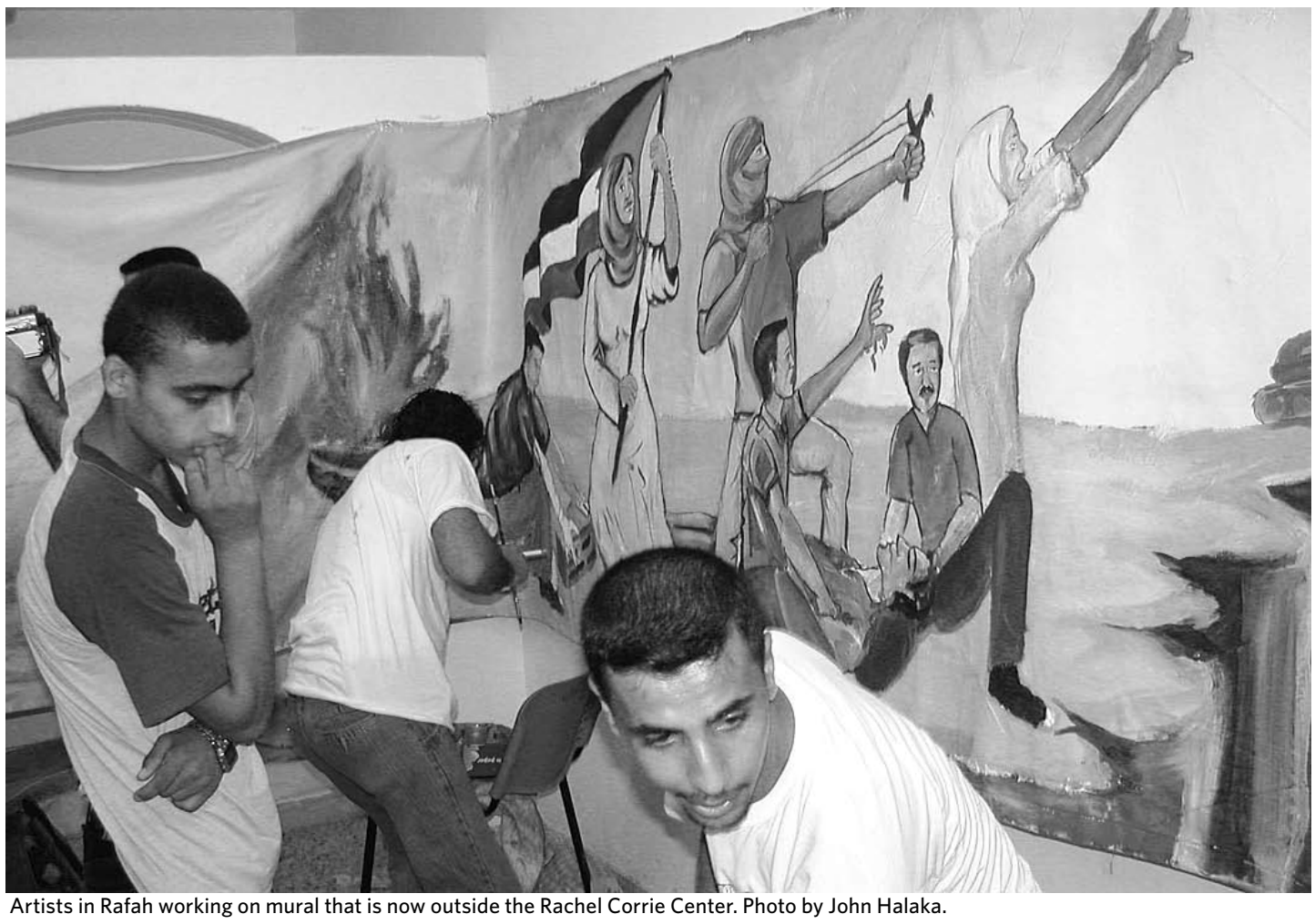
Muralists bring Palestinian experience to Oly

by Chris Allert



Artists in Rafah working on mural that is now outside the Rachel Corrie Center. Photo by John Halaka.

The Olympia-Rafah Mural Project is an official recognition, by the people of Olympia, Washington, of the sister city relationship that exists with the city of Rafah, Palestine. Through the act of creating a collaborative public mural, we will express our desire for Palestinian self-determination, which is rooted in honoring the common struggles for global justice faced by marginalized people everywhere. By upholding rights for all, we seek to break down barriers to understanding, increase visibility for Palestinian people, encourage imagination, embrace the hope and courage of Rachel Corrie, and bring people together in one voice for change. (*rachelcorriefoundation.org/site/break-the-silence-the-olympia-rafah-mural-project*) Currently, we are in the process of negotiating an arrangement with a landlord for a downtown location for the mural.

Break the Silence Mural and Arts Project (BTS) is an arts/activist group committed to using creative projects to facilitate social change and greater awareness of the complexities of the conflict in Occupied Palestine. (*www.breakthesilencearts.typepad.com*)

Susan Greene has been painting murals for over 20 years. She is a founding memeber of Break The Silence Mural and Arts Project, a Psycologist, and she directs the learning center at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Lisa Nessan has taken part in several delegations to Palestine, and is a member of Break The Silence, and posts her photography and writing at *freckle.blogs.com*.

When did you start painting murals? Was that before you got involved in Palestine Solidarity?

SUSAN GREENE: Yes, I started painting murals when I was in college at SUNY Binghamton. Even before that I was fascinated by them, these big giant paintings, and the whole community thing. I was very ambivalent about art that people put in galleries. I wanted to do art that was connected to life. Murals really seemed like a marriage between art and politics. I was definitely trying to find my way as a muralist before Palestine. By the time I got involved in Palestine, that was the way that I worked.

Are you Jewish? When did you start thinking about Palestine? How were you introduced to it?

GREENE: Yes, both my parents are Jewish.

I think I always had a discomfort with what was happening there, but I didn't know that much. I've been an activist for a long time, using mural painting as a community organizing tool, as a way to resist.

In the early 1980s I read *The Question of Palestine* by Edward Said. I had a kind of colonial/imperial critique of the world, I was seeing things through that lens of imperialism and colonialism. It was not a big leap to Palestine at all.

But going there was a transformative experience. I lived in a refugee camp for three months with three other Jewish American women in 1989 during the first Intifada. That experience of life under military occupation, which is in my name, in the name of a Jewish homeland, and at the expense of the Palestinians, who really welcomed us with open arms, who were very gracious, who told us all kinds of stories about their lives—everyone we met was a refugee—they told us about their lives before they were exiled from their villages where they had Jewish neighbors. We heard about this other time, while perhaps not perfect, people basically lived in relative peace and harmony. It was Zionism that really changed things. The betrayal that older people felt and the pain they felt about what had happened was profound.

We talked to a lot of people and painted six or seven murals during that three month period. What we painted really came out of our discussions with people, what we heard from people. The murals were all community based, so we worked with people to design and paint each one. Some of them were very quick ones, and then this one in the Popular Arts Center in Al Biereh, which is right next to Ramallah was much more detailed, and we worked on that one steadily for the entire three months.

And then we had an opening, which was illegal, because Palestinians at that time weren't allowed to gather in groups larger than three. There were a couple hundred people at the opening. At every turn we saw how difficult life was for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the name of a safe haven for the Jews. The whole thing was Kafkaesque. Watching soldiers with Yarmulkes on their heads shoot at Palestinian schoolchildren—it was wrenching. As a Jew, I'm not religious, but I certainly identify as a Jew culturally, it was hard to see that. Israel presents itself, describes itself, perceives itself in a very different way. They think they are a very kind people, a fair people, a just people. And then to see what that really means—it's not so different from things here, the way that the American society absolutely denies the success that it has based on the oppression of other people.

Did you hear the news when the City Council rejected the Sister City Relationship with Rafah?

GREENE: Yes, I watched it online. The day that the hearing happened, I was right there. It was not surprising, and it was also disturbing. There were many more people speaking in favor than against. But there were people speaking against it, and with the most spurious reasons for being against it, like "it's making our community divisive," or "the government there is in favor of violence." It's such a contradiction, because there are other sister city relationships that Olympia has, with governments who are very guilty of human rights abuses. But people were lining up, and people were eloquent, speaking in favor of it.

Where were you when you heard Rachel died? What did you think of it at the time?

LISA NESSAN: I was at a friend's house in San Francisco. My friend Rob called me. I was homeless at the time because I'd just come back from Palestine. I was hanging out in the City a lot because there was a lot of talk about the war. It was going to be any day now. And I remember he called, and he said, "The Israelis fucking did it."

"What did they do?"

"They killed an American. 23 year-old woman from Olympia."

And I said, "Oh my god, who was it?" because I had just been there, and he said, "Rachel Corrie."

And I said "I met that girl. I know that girl."

I walked away from my friends, went and sat outside on their front porch, and I said "Can I call you later?"

Then I just sat there and cried for a long time.

It could have been me. It could have been any of us. Then I started calling everyone I knew to organize a response to this.

▸ **INTERVIEW** continued on page 5

Frank's Landing reopens smoke shop

by Daisy Ouye

A partnership between Frank's Landing Indian Community and Squaxin Island Tribe ended an eight-month government closure of a business that provided vital infrastructure to a community of many Native Tribes. On Jan. 18, the store got a new start as "The Skookum Creek Outlet at the Landing." Under ownership and management of Squaxin Island Tribe, the smokeshop is in compliance with a 2001 cigarette excise tax compact legislated by the state of Washington.

The compact also allows for the sale of a brand manufactured by the Squaxins' own production plant, Skookum Creek. The "Complete" brand is sold at a lower price than larger manufacturers, giving their outlets a competitive edge. This historic alliance will secure restoration of funding to Wa He Lut Indian School, and many other crucial programs previously funded by Frank's Landing Smokeshop.

In May, federal agents with raised guns, raided the smokeshop and the private home of the owners, confiscating property and shutting them down. Inconsistent with state policy and Executive Order, the raids took place during negotiations for their own state compact.

Frank's Landing was at the center of the struggle to retain treaty rights to fish the rivers. The victory won in the 1974 Boldt decision ensured those rights for Northwest Natives and was due, largely, to the decades-long dedication of the people of Frank's Landing. Dedication not forgotten by the Squaxin Island Tribe. A grand opening celebration took place Feb. 1.

Daisy Ouye is a frequent contributor to Works In Progress.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a free, volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

Submissions

Please send text as Word attachments. Artwork and photos can be sent electronically or we can scan them for you as camera-ready/black & white.
WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

Articles may be reprinted. Please cite source.

If you don't see your issue being covered in Works In Progress*, it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)*

Send submissions to *olywip@gmail.com* or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

Governing Tool

The following statement is part of the Editorial Policy and is the governing tool for the Anti-Discrimination Clause:
WIP *will make every effort to work with the contributor of material considered by* WIP *to be offensive in order to reach a mutually agreed upon resolution, but* WIP *reserves the right as a last resort to edit or not print submitted material.*

Mission Statement

"Our aim is to confront injustice and encourage a participatory democracy based on economic, social, and environmental justice. *Works In Progress* is dedicated to providing a voice for those most affected by the exclusionary and unfair practices that seek to silence the oppressed."

Anti-Discrimination Clause

We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society, and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

Back Issues

Some back issues are available in the Timberland Library system. *WIP* is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Help Iraq vets start a coffeehouse in Tacoma

The concept of opening a GI coffeehouse near Ft. Lewis is becoming a reality. The Seattle and Tacoma Chapters of Iraq Veterans Against the War are raising money to open a GI-run coffeehouse near the Washington base. Coffeehouses have traditionally served as anti-war headquarters and have been integral in creating an anti-war GI movement. Only $5,000 is needed before the coffeehouse can open. If you can send $10 or any amount of money to the GI voice project in Tacoma, we can open a center of GI resistance.

Checks must be made to: Seattle Iraq Veterans Against the War and the memo must read: GI Voice Project. Please send all tax-deductible donations to: GI Voice Project, 5506 Detroit Avenue, SW, Lakewood, WA 98499.

Donations needed for WIP for Prisoners

Seeking donations to help fund Works In Progress subscriptions for folks who are incarcerated.

We have a list of prisoners in various parts of the country who normally receive a complimentary monthly subscription to WIP. Due to our restricted finances we have not had enough postage to cover all of the papers to prisoners over the last several months. For about $10 per month each of the prisoners can receive their WIP. Please consider donating to the postage fund that allows incarcerated men and women to be gifted with the news from our fine, independent, all volunteer run publication. Send checks to Works In Progress Prisoner Subscriptions, P.O. Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507

Greg Palast videos on TCTV

Sunday, February 3, 10 p.m.
The documentary series "The Big Picture" seen on Thurston Community Television, cable channel 22, will feature videos by Greg Palast in February and March. The series, sponsored by the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation runs every Sunday at 10 p.m..

The February program will be "The Election Files" revealing evidence of election fraud in 2000, and 2004, and predictions of fraud in 2008 (one hour). It will be followed by a program about the presidential election in Mexico, 2006, (15 minutes)

POWER public speaking training

Monday, February 4, 5:30 p.m., United First Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE, Olympia.

Attend POWER's Public Speaking Training to get pointers in effective story telling. We start at 5:30 with a potluck and have onsite childcare.

POWER is an organization of low-income parents and allies advocating for a strong social safety net while working toward a world where children and care giving are truly valued, and the devastation of poverty has been eradicated.

Parents Organizing For Welfare and Economic Rights, 701 Franklin Street SE Olympia, WA 98501, 360-352-9716 or 866-343-9716, welfarerights@riseup.net, http://www.myspace.com/parentsorganizing

Protest at Wal-Mart Lobby Day

Wednesday, February 6, 10 a.m. to noon, Senate Rules Room, State Capitol, Olympia, WA

February 6th is Wal-Mart Lobby Day. Wal-Mart managers will be meeting in the Senate Rules Room. Protesters will be meeting outside the Rules Room.

Iraqi Student Solidarity Committee Community Forum

Wednesday, February 6th at 3 p.m. at the Evergreen State College, Seminar II, A1107

The Iraqi Student Solidarity Committee (ISSC) at The Evergreen State College has been working since October, 2007 to get the Evergreen State College to accept and pay for the tuition, room and board for three Iraqi students beginning in September 2008 and until they obtain their degree. The US war against Iraq has devastated the educational system in Iraq and Iraqi refugees are severely restricted from getting higher education in Syria and Jordan, where there are almost two million Iraqi refugees. This student led proposal is part of a national movement, the Iraqi Student Project (www.IraqiStudentProject.org) to get US universities to open up their campuses to Iraqi students. The Evergreen faculty support this request as do over 700 students who have signed a petition in support. The Evergreen administration has not yet responded to our proposal. We invite everyone to an Evergreen and Olympia community meeting on what we should do to attain this proposal and how to get involved in this campaign. For more info: email sesame@evergreen.edu, or call 360-867-6724

Author Susan Wicklund, reading from "This Common Secret: My Journey as an Abortion Doctor"

Wednesday, February 13, 7 p.m. at Orca Books, 509 E. 4th Ave, Olympia

Susan Wicklund, National NOW Board Member and abortion doctor, will be at Orca Books on February 13th, 2008 at 7:00pm reading from her new book *This Common Secret: My Journey as An Abortion Doctor.* Through this book tour Dr. Wicklund hopes to educate and widen the participation of diverse women and the men who love us around women's health issues and especially the politics of reproduction/abortion in the current social and political landscape.

It All Starts At Home—Housing & Homeless Advocacy Day

Thursday, February 14, 8:30 a.m. at United Churches, 11th and Capitol Way in Olympia

This year we will use Housing & Homelessness Advocacy Day to ensure that policymakers in Olympia understand the foundational role that a home plays in education, healthcare, jobs and transportation. Our message, "It All Starts At Home," is all about the connection between affordable housing, supportive services, tenant protections and manufactured housing preservation and the ability of a family to succeed, of a senior to thrive and of a child to reach their potential.

Register online with the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance at www.wliha.org. Childcare and lunch available. You will receive additional instructions & details via email after you register.

Call Pat with the Thurston County Tenants Union if you have questions about any of these events or are looking for scholarships to attend them: 360-943-3036 or tctu@tenantsunion.org

POWER lobby day

President's Day, Monday, February 18th, 10 a.m. First Christian Church, 701 Franklin Street SE, Olympia

Join us at 10 a.m. for onsite childcare, lunch, training and will meet with legislators. Please let us know you are coming at 352-9716 or welfarerights@riseup.net.

POWER is an organization of low-income parents and allies advocating for a strong social safety net while working toward a world where children and care giving are truly valued, and the devastation of poverty has been eradicated.

Parents Organizing For Welfare and Economic Rights, 701 Franklin Street SE Olympia, WA 98501, 360-352-9716 or 866-343-9716, welfarerights@riseup.net, http://www.myspace.com/parentsorganizing

Robin Hahnel on economic justice and socialism in Latin America

Wednesday, February 27, 1 p.m., Seminar 2, A1107, The Evergreen State College, (on: The Present and Future of Economic Justice and Socialism in Venezuela)

Orca Books, 509 E. 4th, Olympia, 7 p.m. (on: The Present and Future of Economic Justice and Socialism in Latin America)

Robin Hahnel, a professor of economics at American University in Washington, D.C., is one of the most thoughtful and insightful political economists in the United States. In the books he has authored and coauthored *Looking Forward, the Political Economy of Participatory Economics* and most recently, *Economic Justice and Democracy,* Robin Hahnel has written in depth about strategy towards and vision of a participatory economics society as a necessary and desirable alternative to capitalism. He has studied the politics and economics of many countries in Latin America, most recently Venezuela in which he visited and gave lectures in the summer 2007.

Sponsored by OMJP, SDS, Center for Radical Education (CRE). For more information, contact Peter Bohmer, bohmerp@evergreen.edu, 867-6431

▸ **ANNOUNCEMENTS** continue on next page

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The Subprime Mortgage Crisis

by Tillman Clark

Recently, if you follow any sort of news source, the subject of the economy and its recession is one heard often. A common buzzword heard alongside this topic is that of the "subprime" mortgage crisis. But what exactly is the subprime mortgage crisis? What does subprime mean and why is it so important to the economy and this looming recession that everyone is talking about? Why isn't the overwhelmingly disastrous effects that it is having on people of color, lower, middle and working class, and American citizens on the front page everyday? Because of the mainstream media's failure to accurately describe the underpinnings of the subprime mortgage crisis, and what it means for the economy and the people of this country, it is important to shed some light on the subject.

To start, subprime lending is a financial term for high-interest loans to people who would otherwise be considered too risky for a conventional loan. These borrowers, who do not qualify for the best market interest rates because of poor credit history, include middle-class families who have accumulated too much debt and low-income working families who want to buy a home. To try to ensure a covering of the risk, lenders charge such borrowers higher than normal interest rates or they make "adjustable rate" loans, which offer low initial interest rates that jump sharply after a few years in the form of resets.

How the subprime crisis has been able to develop to near-nationwide catastrophe lies primarily in an arrangement made between mortgage lenders and Wall Street. The arrangement was considered mutually beneficial for several reasons. The mortgage lenders would start by giving a loan to a family with a decent income but not a lot of wealth. They would then guide them into a high priced loan for a property they could not afford. In the past, mortgage lenders would not sign on to something like this because they would be concerned about getting their money back. But the deal they worked out with Wall Street is that Wall Street could buy this debt, and sell it again and again and again so a group of different people on different layers were making money off bad loans. Eventually, mortgage lenders didn't care if they were actually going to get the money back from the people they lent it to because they knew they were making their money by selling it to Wall Street, so both parties were happy.

Which is where the current crisis emerges. Even though a lot of wealthy people have made even more money off this process, major financial institutions are suffering consequences across the country because this debt had to be paid off sometime and somewhere. Merrill Lynch, the world's biggest broker, has posted a record loss after writing down $19 billion on assets dealing with subprime mortgages. Citigroup, another huge lending institution, posted an $18.1 billion write-down on subprime related assets, and also eliminated 4,200 jobs in what is expected to be the beginning of a series of layoffs stretching through this year.

But even worse is that the middle and lower classes involved with this are having their credit ruined, their homes foreclosed, and are watching already weakened financial communities slide into much worse conditions. According to the Center for Responsible Lending, 7.2 million households currently have subprime mortgages, and more than 14 percent of those are in default. It projects that one of every five of those loans issued in 2005-2006 will end in foreclosure, with 2.2 million families losing their homes.

The current crisis' convincingly negative effect on people of color is obvious. Lenders like to claim that there is no deliberate racial discrimination involved in subprime loans and that there is just a large number of people who had bad credit in communities of color that make the mistake of taking out loans that they cannot afford. But subprime lending industries have a propensity to target the weak and financially insecure in our society to take advantage of their desire for affluence and/or security, among other reasons.

It just so happens that the people they target are disproportionately people of color. In a report, issued by United for a Fair Economy, entitled *Foreclosed: The State of the Dream 2008*, it is stated that, according to federal data, people of color are more than three times more likely to have subprime loans.

High cost loans account for 55% of loans to African Americans but only 17% of loans to Whites.

African Americans and Latino Americans, in particular, trying to become home owners (which is the number one source of wealth for most Americans), were duped by private companies putting them into loans that they could not afford. According to the *Foreclosed* report, the subprime mortgage crisis will cause people of color to lose up to $213 billion dollars, leading to the greatest loss of wealth for African Americans in modern US history. So whether or not the lenders admit that they are deliberately targeting people of color, it is impossible to ignore the institutionalized racial inequality perpetuated by the practices of subprime lending industries unless you turn a blind eye to the statistics—which many industries are most likely doing in the name of profits.

So if you aren't a direct victim of subprime loans, why does this matter to you? Over the last 30-40 years we have witnessed government policies that have brought more wealth to the already wealthy while leaving the middle and working classes with stagnant wages and skyrocketing costs like that of housing and health care, to name a few. As people look for ways to try to cover those costs, too many have been talked into refinancing their homes with loans they cannot afford and then end up losing their homes and being worse off than they were before.

Short term solutions include more public spending on human needs like health care, affordable housing and mass transit, low or no interest government loans to families in need, not allowing evictions or foreclosures, and a higher tax on the wealthy.

The subprime crisis is going to lead to the foreclosures of many homes and thus decrease home values in the neighborhoods where homes are foreclosed and, eventually, housing in general. Decline in the value of housing means a decline in wealth for homeowners, which means a big loss for the consumption spending that drives our economy. The fact that the majority of consumption spending was, and is, financed by debt, and the industries connected with housing (washing machines, furniture, etc.) will now see a much smaller market, only makes the likely onset of a recession worse.

As housing values go down, the property taxes go down as well, leading to less revenue for city and state governments to provide services for their constituents (most likely public schools, which also perpetuate inequality). Also recently, the Dow Jones industrial average lost more than 300 points. This means a decrease in consumption spending of wealthy people and a decrease in investment. All these factors combined could lead to a nation-wide depression that could have vastly broad effects on all of us in terms of jobs, education, and standard of living.

President Bush made an announcement about his plans for an economic stimulus package of approximately $150 billion dollars that included and focused on tax cuts and rebates. This is basically designed as a quick fix to spur people into spending money and cause the economy to grow and the crisis to be averted. But this really is just a quick fix. There is no guarantee that a slight increase in consumption spending will offset this crisis. In fact, we have not seen the worst of the storm. Remember what subprime lending entails. Some are made as "'adjustable rate' loans, which offer low initial interest rates that jump sharply after a few years in the form of resets." There have been a large number of mortgage resets in the past few months, but unfortunately most of the resets will be occurring starting right now. In Dec. 2007, there were 58 million Adjustable Rate Mortgage Resets, up from 22 million in Jan. 2007. Between January and June of 2008, it is expected that 521 million Adjustable Rate Mortgages will be reset. That is an average of 87 million per month with a high of 110 million in March. Many of those loans will supposedly be refinanced, but even if they are, it does nothing to help the credit situation and only stalls and worsens the inevitable recession tied in with this crisis.

Basically what the subprime mortgage crisis points to is not some sort of blemish on the smooth surface of our system that can be solved with economic stimulus packages and reforms. Instead, it points to the exploitative nature of capitalism. It points to a system that fosters an inequality of wealth and debt while blatantly encouraging aggressively predatory institutions in the name of profit and economic growth. These institutions are unchecked from prospering off the ignorance, need and poverty of the majority of people of color and the lower, middle, and working class—all of whom are desperately, at every turn, scratching and clawing for a meager piece of the pie. The subprime crisis requires radical solutions to help alleviate a looming disaster.

Short term solutions include more public spending on human needs like health care, affordable housing and mass transit, low or no interest government loans to families in need, not allowing evictions or foreclosures, and a higher tax on the wealthy. Long term solutions include talking about an economic system that does not encourage predatory industries to flourish and does not rely primarily on ever-increasing consumption. We have just touched the surface of the subprime mortgage crisis, and if things continue as they are, and wealth is not distributed more equally and debt burdens eased, more and more of us will see our livelihoods squelched and our futures darkened. And that is a crisis that cannot be refinanced by any loan.

Tillman Clark is a student at The Evergreen State College in Olympia.

▸ **ANNOUNCEMENTS** continued

The LA-8 Case, Civil Liberties & Jewish-Arab Solidarity

Saturday, Feb. 2, 7 pm The Evergreen State College;, Lecture Hall 1; Sunday, Feb. 3, 2 pm Traditions Café 5th & Water

"Voices in Exile: Immigrants and the First Amendment" (1988, 30 min)

Since 9-11 and the passage of the USA Patriot Act, balancing civil liberties with national security is a major concern. "Voices in Exile" follows an astonishing 20-year deportation case against Palestinians in Los Angeles that foreshadows current government use of "secret evidence." This riveting video examines plans for rounding up Arab Americans, reminiscent of the WWII internment of Japanese Americans.

Michel Shehadeh is one of the defendants and leading respondents in the landmark Los Angeles Eight case, the longest running political immigration case in US history. Recently all charges were dropped by the government against the LA 8 after twenty-one years of legal struggle.

Shehadeh's writings have appeared in many publications, such as the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, the San Francisco Chronicle, Al-Jazeera net and Al-Adab magazine.

Joan Mandell is an award-winning filmmaker whose films, Tales from Arab Detroit, Gaza Ghetto, and Voices in Exile, are widely taught on US college campuses. Mandell has taught film and video production, international film history and media literacy at the University of California/Irvine and the College for Contemporary Studies, Detroit. As a Jewish-American, she will also speak about the history of Jewish-Arab solidarity in the struggle for Civil Liberties and Palestinian Rights.

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Canada gets picky: US activist, resident banished for 2 years

by Sergei Holmes

Canada is often thought of as our peaceful, docile neighbor to the north. Even a potential enclave to retreat to when the United States becomes intolerable to live in. However, the reality is quite different with internal problems there reflecting the glaring social inadequacies we face. Acceptance of immigrants is one of the most pertinent to those in the US Northwest and Canada's policies are becoming more adamantly conservative with each passing year.

US soldiers who desert the army and come to Canada eager to claim refugee status are denied and ordered to leave the country. Activists crossing the border learn by the experience of rejection that they may wish to emphasize the 'happy tourist' angle to their trip instead of the political rally they might accidentally stumble into.

For US citizen Alison Bodine, the case was neither as her long-term student residence in Canada for over four years to earn her bachelor's degree had led to many routine border crossings. In that time, Bodine became affiliated with Vancouver political student groups at the campus of her university (University of British Columbia) and eventually Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) and Cuba solidarity groups.

On the night of Sept. 10, 2007, Bodine was crossing into Canada and her political materials were confiscated. On Sept. 13th, when Bodine came back to claim her items and return to the United States, she was arrested by Canada Border Services Agency. She was charged with misrepresentation and banned from Canada for two years effective midnight Nov. 17, 2007. At the border, 30 minutes before her designated banishment, a Canadian border patrol officer greeted her cryptically with the words "We've been waiting for you."

Was there anything that you had experienced crossing the border or something that you had heard vicariously about crossing the border that would have led you to conclude what was going to happen to you?

Not explicitly. Historically, people have been more concerned coming from Canada going into the United States about what the border guards are going to say to them about political materials or how intensely they're going to question them about things like beliefs. But going into Canada I've never been too concerned going into the border. That's kind of illogical based on the fact that Canada has the same immigration laws. Canada turns away an astounding amount of immigrant and refugees based on the color of their skin or religion. It's something that should have been expected but maybe wasn't so much expected. I've heard cases of literature not being allowed in because it was printed in the United States but what I had with me was stuff that was, for the most part, printed in Canada. So that wasn't an excuse they could use and it wasn't something we were expecting to have to face.

What type of support did you receive from your friends and groups that you were already organized with, and to what extent did that affect the media coverage of the case?

I was arrested late at night. People were on guard because I had gone back to collect things at the border, I was having to talk to the [CBS] agents again and we weren't exactly sure what was going to happen. So I went with a friend and he was able to make the phone call to say, "Alison's been arrested."

People immediately gathered from the anti-war coalition that I work with [and] the Cuba solidarity groups I work with, organizing for a defense campaign. I was told not a whole lot in the beginning: why I was arrested, why I was being taken to a prison in Surrey for the night. So that's all the information that we had and [my support] began organizing for all the possibilities if I was to be held in prison, or held in immigration holding, thinking and brainstorming what might exist in Canadian law and immigration law that had caused my arrest to happen. Using your one phone call, your right to talk to a lawyer, I was able to relay to them all the information I got at every point. I communicated with them that I had been told I would be awaiting an admissibility hearing and detention review, that I would be in immigration holding for the next four days.

And then they began doing real organizing. Calling members of the community, making a callout for demonstrations at the Immigration offices in downtown Vancouver. So there was a demonstration at those immigration offices of about 60 people that Friday demanding my release. Through this demonstration, CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio was alerted to my case and I was able to do an interview with someone that evening that aired at 6:00. Immigration officials arrived that morning to release me at about 8:00 that night. Gave me my release papers, said, "We're holding your detention review right now, there it is, we're not holding you any more." And that's when the Alison Bodine defense committee started.

For the next two months, it formed as a coalition of community members from all different backgrounds coming together in order to raise awareness of my case, about the case of other immigrants and refugees under attack in Canada right now, about the broadness of immigration law, how it allows people to be attacked on the base of their beliefs, on their religion, on the color of their skin, and how in this case it had been the political targeting of an activist within Vancouver but not a Canadian citizen.

Now there is a petition campaign to have the ban against me lifted in which we're looking for 10,000 signatures delivered to the Immigration Minister of Canada who can lift the ban against me. They also got a lot of support from letter writing. People who would write support letters to the Minister in Charge of [CBSA] (who were charging me) as well as send them to the defense committee so that we could have a logging of them as well. And we got support from the Canadian Federation of Students, multiple unions including the Hospital Employees Union which is 40,000 plus workers in British Columbia, different community organizations, No One is Illegal in Toronto came out to support. Really just groups from all different sorts of backgrounds.

It was an effective defense campaign. It raised a lot of awareness in newspapers, daily media coverage, cover stories, also in independent newspapers, like Spanish language newspapers that run in Vancouver. Radio as well. There's a co-op radio station as well as the major radio stations in Vancouver really jumped on to the case because of its sensational aspects (at least for the major media). Because I was a US citizen that had been turned away from Canada, had had things seized, was now being arrested for being an anti-war activist and had been politically targeted. I had been able to have those networks to have been able to call and we were able to respond quickly unlike so many people that are turned away everyday that don't know anybody in Canada yet but are equally turned away for unjustifiable reasons. I think the defense committee did a lot of effective work in raising public awareness, putting pressure on [CBSA].

At this point, although the legal process has just begun, what particular people will you begin focusing on?

On the legal side, we've had to have hearings and had to hire lawyers. And now we're at the stage where we want to take the case to a federal court appeal. Bring it in front of the Federal Court of Canada which requires preparing documents and submitting them. Then the Federal Court decides whether they want to hear the case and then they make their decision. The court can take an indefinite amount of time to rule either to make a ruling to hear the case or to rule whether the charges against me should be overturned and the ban against me lifted. So the process could take more than two years if they chose to make it that way.

I think it's important that [this] continues hand-in-hand with the political campaign. That we're still collecting these 10,000 signatures because the federal court is going to know about all these things and be aware of all the community support I have and we'll use those as well to put pressure on Immigration Minister Diane Finley. She can decide, at any time, to lift the ban against me and let me back into the country.

With that name, is that someone that people in the United States could focus on in terms of direct advocacy for your case and what other aspects could people do to help support your trial?

Definitely. I think the big thing is continuing the petition campaign in which signatures from people in the United States are equally as important as signatures from people in Canada. It's about showing the immigration minister that I have public support. That people know what's going on, that they know what [CBSA] did, what Canada immigration did in banning a political activist from Canada. Collecting and gathering signatures for me is great, also continuing to write letters to Diane Finley and forwarding them on to the defense campaign so that we know they're being written is another important step. Just so that my name remains on her desk so that she realizes this is a name she's going to be have to be dealing with. Also basic awareness. Just telling people about what happened.

In what ways can what happened to you serve as a warning for people crossing the border from either side based on the information that you had in the past combined with your own experience. What is it activists coming from both countries should be more aware of now?

What happened to me we have to see as an escalation of what's been a long history of policy at the border. An escalation in that I'm a US citizen they chose to target and ban from Canada. It came at a time when they were also increasingly interrogating US war resisters (soldiers who were entering Canada from the United States in order to claim refugee status) because they were resisting the war in Iraq as well as they banned Medea Benjamin and Ann Wright who are activists from Code Pink in the United States. Overall, it was a test for the government of Canada as to how people would respond. And because people responded strongly, in the case of war resisters, in the case of Medea Benjamin and Ann Wright, I think everyone should be aware that it's something that could happen. If you cross the borders with political materials, the laws are written and are so broad that they can charge you with misrepresentation. There has been an escalation and they'll be willing to take it farther in the future and they'll have to because the government of Canada and the government of the United States are increasingly having to deal with dissent and this is one way in which they're going to try and cut that down and try to discourage people from getting involved.

To find out more information about Bodine's case (and other immigrants), and to get involved with Alison's campaign, visit alisonbodine.blogspot.com

Activist Alison Bodiine speaks about her case at a Vancouver, BC anti-war conference. Photo used by permission from the website mawovancouver.org

▸ **MURALISTS** continued from page 1

GREENE: When I had heard this, I had a sense that the impossible had happened. Before I had a sense that because I'm an American, I'm invincible, I'm safe. It really was a line that was crossed when that happenned that really shocked people. I think that was the intention. It's an old, tried and true method, that if you sacrifice someone, it really scares people.

Pretty soon after that, I thought I'd like to try to do a mural there.

What was your connection to Rafah and to Olympia before and after Rachel died?

GREENE: I had no connection at all to Olympia except that I liked the band Sleater-Kinney. So up until this particular event, that was about it. I had been to Gaza once before [July 2002]. I interviewed a kid whose family were all killed. He was one of the only surviving members of his family, standing in the rubble right where his bedroom was.

Then I worked in Beit Hanoun, with some kids, and did an art class there. I went to Rafah one day and we saw the checkpoint to Egypt.

Then the following summer I tried to go back, and they wouldn't let me in. And I think that was partly related to what happened to Rachel. They wouldn't let any foreigners in after that.

A portion of the mural on the building of the Rachel Corrie center in Rafah, Palestine. Photo used by permission from the Rachel Corrie Center.

You had about a week to spend in Rafah to paint the mural in 2005.

GREENE: Cindy said that when Khaled Nasrallah was here, and he saw the trees, he said some thing like "Rachel left paradise to come to us."

Part of what's enticing to me about trying to do this project is the very dramatic difference between Olympia and Rafah, and how now these two cities are very inextricably linked, because of this tragedy. People now know each other, who under "normal" circumstances never would.

If it wasn't for what is happening in Palestine, I don't think I ever would have gone there in the first place. Although I love Cindy deeply, I never should have met her, really. I never should have met you either.

How did you come up with the design for the mural in Rafah? There's a hand reaching for the sky that's also a tree. Rachel's face is in the wrist. There are salmon to the right and left, and there are doves in the sky. The roots of the tree show, there are chains breaking, and there's also a key above the hand.

GREENE: People in Rafah suggested the different images, and so many of these, like the roots going down into the ground, are common in Palestinian resistance art. We didn't have the luxury of time, really, but we had the pressure of time, which can be a good thing. People did drawings, and then we created a collage of all the drawings. We were working with a lot of artists and they all had their own ideas. We worked with the Rafah artist union, and some people came from Khan Younis.

Do you see the Palestinian struggle connected to the Native American Struggle? Have you done much work with Native Americans?

GREENE: I hope to do more. I've started to work more intentionally with Native Americans. Recently Break the Silence did this art exhibit called "Internal Exile" which was a show of Palestinian, Native American, and Latino art on the subject of internal exile, this idea of people being colonized in their own land. That was really great because people came from different communities that normally don't gather in the same space. It was about making these connections that we will be building on. It's a very natural connection and people felt it easily.

CA: You've come under pressure for murals that you've done. Did you have to remove images of keys from one of the murals in San Francisco? Who wanted you to take things out of it?

GREENE: It was the Edward Said mural at San Francisco State University. It was the Zionists and Jewish groups on campus that wanted to change it.

Our vision for the mural came out of town hall meetings. People wanted a particular kind of mural about Palestine, and it was spearheaded by the General Union of Palestinian Students. They enlisted Fayeq Oweis and myself to be the artists, but really we were realizing their vision, which was based on these meetings, where a list of symbols were generated, and ideas were generated that people wanted to see represented in the mural.

The controversy was that included in that design was an image of Handala, the cartoon figure by Najil Ali, and a key. The key, in Arabic, said "al-awda", which means return. This was bound to upset people, and it did.

What do you think of controversy? Do you seek out things that will be provocative in the murals? Do you avoid controversy?

GREENE: I think the key was going to be controversial whether it said al-awda or not. They absolutely hated the key, because that represents the right to return. The right to return is completely threatening to Zionism, and they were very upset about that. And Handala, they said, is a symbol that Israel should be destroyed. They found that figure to be "hateful and divisive". So people brought pressure to bear on the president, and there were faculty at the school who also held these positions. The students struggled very, very hard to figure out how to handle it.

A mural by Susan Greene, local artists from Rafah and Khan Younis. The quote on the ribbon reads "I think it's important that human rights and resistance to oppression be included in the way we define ourselves as a community." Photo by John Halaka

I wasn't sure the mural was ever going to happen. There was a meeting with activist scholars who are older than the students, activists with a lot of experience, and they said that the point of the mural is that it's about Edward Said, who represents all of these things. His work is about the right to return and the Palestinian right to self-determination, about questioning the existence of Israel as a Zionist Jewish-only state. Are those symbols worth fighting about keeping when the mural actually includes all those ideas without them? This is the only mural of this nature in the country. The students were finally convinced, and agreed to remove the key and Handala so the mural could go forward.

Even without the key and Handala, the idea of the mural still hasn't changed. All Edward Said's books were there in the mural, and "A Question of Palestine" is the first book. If they had fought for the symbols, there would have never been a mural.

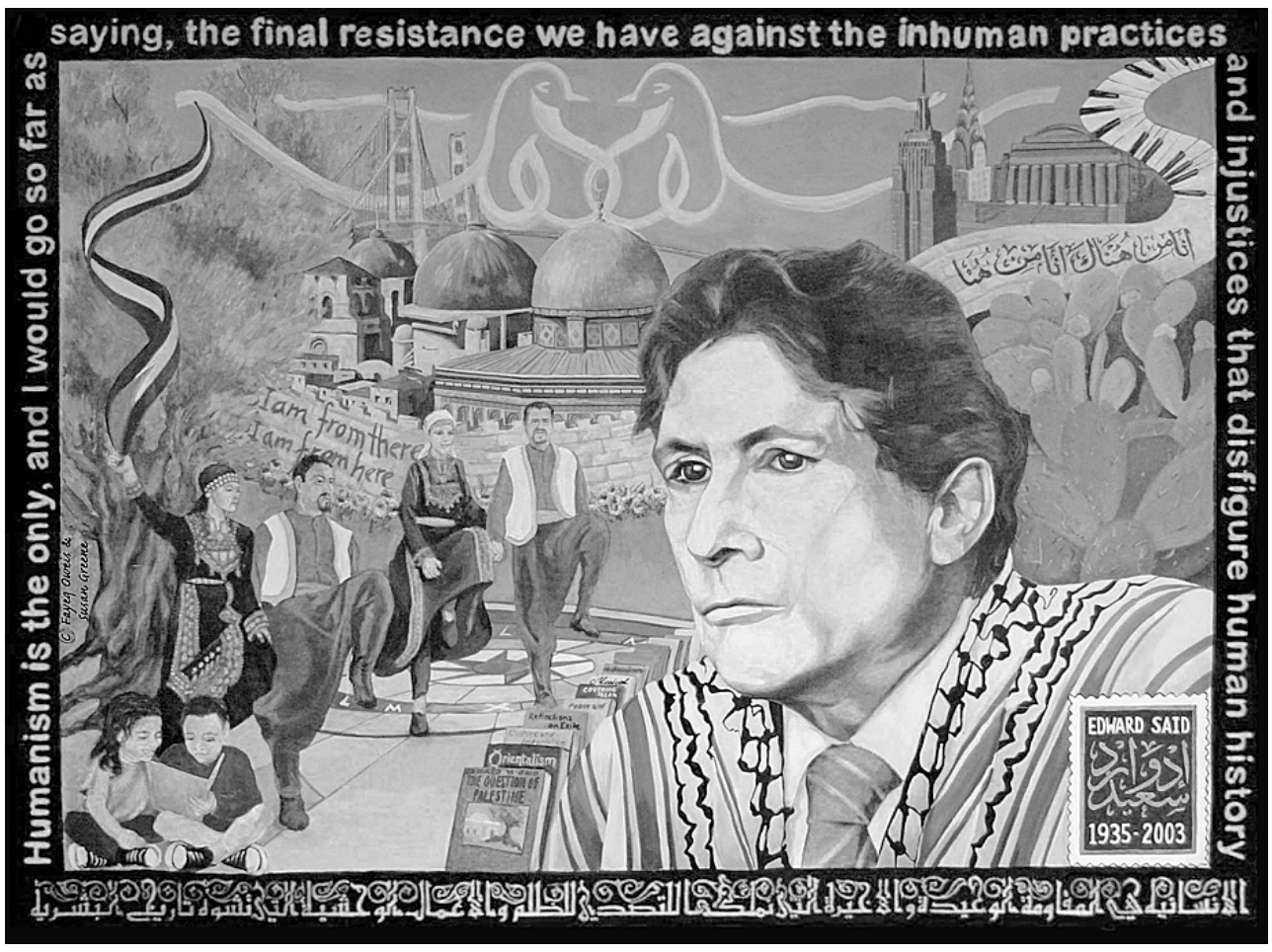
How do you think it matters? This mural in Olympia, what do you expect it to accomplish?

GREENE: Some of the things it will accomplish can't be really known now. I hope that this whole project, and the Sister City Mural Project in Rafah, and the documentary I'm working on about doing this, become vehicles for people who are not involved in this topic to identify with it because of what happened to Rachel, and to become more engaged. I hope it becomes something that will get attention beyond the people who know and care about this situation already. I hope for the mural to build communities, not the people that already agree and know, but between other communities. It was so gratifying and great to know that there were Native Americans at the Mural Design Workshop today. I think that the mural can help draw that out and make it visible, and create some excitement about it that can lead to other work.

Did you have any thoughts about the Palestinians blowing up the wall in Rafah a few days ago?

GREENE: I think the Palestinians are very, very restrained people. If anybody was doing that to Americans, there would be riots every day. I think that they are an incredibly non-violent people. And it's just too much. It was great, it moved me to tears to see it. The situation is so horrible to begin with. Cutting off fuel so people are in utter darkness? It's medieval. So I was thrilled to see them break out.

The mural of Edward Said at San Francisco State University. It was painted by Fayeq Oweis and Susan Greene. Photo by Darlene Bouchard.


Humanism is the only, and I would go so far as
saying, the final resistance we have against the inhuman practices
and injustices that disfigure human history
I am from there
I am from here
Orientalism
THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE
EDWARD SAID
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From Annapolis to Gaza
A cycle of meaningless negotiations and harsh repression

By Marco Rosaire Rossi

Throughout the conflict in the Middle East, the United States and Israel have engaged the Palestinians in a cycle of meaningless negotiations and harsh repression. In late 1988, when it became impossible for the US to ignore the Palestinian Liberation Organization's peace plan, the US agreed to organize negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Shortly after the negotiations, Israel increased pressure on the occupied territories. At the time, Israel Defense Minister Yizhak Rabin proudly proclaimed that "the inhabitants of the territories are subject to harsh military and economic pressures... In the end, they will be broken."

The infamous Oslo Accords of 1993—where the memorable photo of Yasser Arafat and Yizhak Rabin shaking hands was taken—was a disaster for Palestinians. Not only did it open the door for a "Swiss cheese" version of a Palestinian state, but it also granted them an independence that was—in the words of journalist Danny Rubinstein—a little bit better than "the autonomy of a POW camp." The second Accords of 1995 was more of the same, except this time Arafat agreed to take on the responsibility of "securing" the occupied areas. As a result, Arafat worked on repressing his own people—including murdering members of Hamas—in order to impress Israeli/US elites.

Considering this history, it shouldn't be much of a surprise that after Bush announced his "vision of a democratic Palestinian State" during the Middle East peace summit in Annapolis last year, that Gaza would be in the horrifying condition that it is in now. The idea that the topic of peace would actually be discussed at the summit wasn't taken seriously by anyone. Even White House Press Secretary Tony Snow admitted that "a lot of people are inclined to try to treat this as a big peace conference. It's not." The purpose of the summit was to give the appearance of progress toward peace, while depicting Hamas as a spoiler to the process—even though they were excluded from the summit by Israel and the US—and thus, provide a pretext for Israel to repress the people of Gaza further. At Bush's last visit to the Middle East, Hamas officials accused Bush (probably accurately) of going ahead with the pattern and giving Israel the green-light to lay siege on Gaza.

> The only hope for Gaza in this dire time is if the people of the world are willing to join them in struggling against the US/Israel occupation.

Currently, Israel has been instituting a military strike into Gaza. 76 Palestinians have been killed in the past few weeks, including children. Israel has claimed that this military strike is in self-defense against rockets fired into Israel by Hamas, but the self-defense arguments are completely baseless. Hamas has offered numerous cease-fire opportunities to Israel—all of which were rejected. Israel has attacked not Hamas militants, but civilians in Gaza—in blatant disregard for international humanitarian law. Also, Hamas' rocket system is extremely pathetic—especially compared to Israel who, thanks to the US, now has the fourth largest military in the world. Hamas rocket attacks are a violation of international law, and ineffective and inhumane, but they produce a fraction of the destruction that Israel does. Since the attack began, only six to eight Israelis have been killed.

Beside the rocket attacks—which are devastating enough—Israel has cut off humanitarian aid and energy into Gaza—again in complete violation of international humanitarian law. This economic warfare is rapidly plunging the people of Gaza deeper into despair. The United Nations has reported that 79% of the people in Gaza live in poverty; a third of the population lives on less than $2 a day; half of the population is unemployed. Without aid and energy, the situation for Palestinians in Gaza is bound to get worse. For a moment, Israel suggested that it might lift the blockade (mostly due to international pressure), but after desperate Palestinians climbed over the wall on Egypt's border in order to get supplies, Israel backed away from the idea claiming that it was no longer necessary.

What makes the situation even more horrendous is that it is unlikely that anything will change among the upper levels of power. Like Bush's war on terror, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has claimed that the siege on Gaza is a war that "will not stop." Israel's only hope is that "the moment will come when the scales will tip in this war and cause the firing in the south to be different from what it is today." Also, like the war on terror, international law doesn't apply to Israel. Israel has unilaterally deemed the occupied areas as "hostile territories," a concept outside the scope of international law and similar to Bush's "unlawful enemy combatants." In December, the Israeli Supreme Court declared that the cut-off of oil to the occupied territories was legal despite the fact that it violates the Fourth Geneva Convention on the laws of war. In addition, the United Nations has been rendered completely ineffective in creating peace in the region by the US.

The US has vetoed over 40 Security Council resolutions condemning Israel. Most recently, the US vetoed a Security Council statement (which is nonbinding and non-enforceable) condemning Israel's siege on Gaza because the rest of the Council didn't want to include language that would reinforce the lie that the siege was in self-defense.

If the cycle of meaningless negotiations followed by harsh repression is going to end, it is going to have to come from below and not from above. The only hope for Gaza in this dire time is if the people of the world are willing to join them in struggling against the US/Israel occupation. Hopefully, international pressure from civil society will become a force that can beat back the current wave of repression from the Israeli Army before it is too late for the Palestinians.

Marco Rosaire Rossi is a former Olympia resident and current student at the University of Peace in Costa Rica.

Evergreen students advocate to host Iraqi refugee students

by Ashley Harrison and Matt Lester

Over four million Iraqis have become refugees since the Iraq War began: 2.2 million Iraqis are displaced within Iraq and over 2 million are externally displaced, primarily in Jordan and Syria. Meanwhile, Congress has promised to allow 7,000 Iraqi refugees into the United States, in a bill designed to grant entry to Iraqis who have assisted our armed forces. That promise has yet to be fulfilled. Only 1,608 Iraqis were admitted by the United States during its fiscal year 2007.

Those are dismal figures compared with the 2,645 Cuban refugees who have been accepted into the United States this year. Adding more shame to the US response, Sweden accepted 8,950 Iraqis in 2006. Tobias Billstrom, Sweden's migration minister, adds that the number of Iraqis accepted into Sweden "is the equivalent of the US taking about 500,000 refugees" when population size is taken into account.

> By granting the waivers, Evergreen will demonstrate its commitments to the five foci of learning, emphasizing the aspect of personal engagement.

The educational implications of this crisis are vast. According to UNICEF, "an estimated 760,000 children were out of primary school in 2006, and 220,000 more displaced children had their educations interrupted in 2007." Many young people from Iraq face incredible challenges to continuing their education. Universities are closed or difficult to reach safely, and those living outside of Iraq as refugees have little access to educational services.

During previous refugee crises, the Evergreen State College has helped students needing to continue their education. Two students attended Evergreen in the 1990's as part of the Bosnian Student Project. More recently, five students from New Orleans attended Evergreen when their colleges were unable to reopen due to Hurricane Katrina's effects. In both situations, Evergreen offered tuition waivers to the students. This precedent reflects a deep commitment to education as well as recognition of the benefits of student exchange. As President Les Purce stated after Hurricane Katrina, "[o]ur primary goal is to assist the schools affected by Katrina through supporting the academic work of their students." As a student body and as a college, we have the opportunity to assist Iraq's academic community in a similar fashion.

This year, SESAME is petitioning Evergreen to grant three tuition and housing waivers for Iraqi students seeking to continue their education in the United States. We are asking the college to provide the waivers for the duration of students' undergraduate status. Our request for three waivers comes from our belief that students will be better supported if they are less isolated within the community. The Iraqi Student Project, an organization helping to place students at college campuses across the nation, will recommend Iraqi students who meet Evergreen's current admission requirements, and help them prepare for the SAT and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) in time to apply and enroll for fall 2008.

By granting the waivers, Evergreen will demonstrate its commitments to the five foci of learning, emphasizing the aspect of personal engagement. We hope to set a national precedent that will bring more students to the United States to obtain their degrees. These scholarships alone would help only these three students, but setting a national precedent for other colleges could help many others. If colleges throughout the United States replicate this process, several hundred Iraqi students, now refugees, could continue their education.

Students can become involved by coming to SESAME Iraqi Student Committee meetings at 3:15 in CAB 320 every Wednesday; by signing the petitions which are available at the SESAME office and which will be available during the film festival, by bringing this project to the attention of other community groups, and on a broader level by demanding that our Congressional representatives accept more refugees into the United States. Finally, students can assist through their efforts to address the cause of the refugee crisis, and resist the ongoing occupation of Iraq.

We also invite students and community members to participate in our Community Forum on Feb. 6, at 3 pm in Seminar II A1107 at the Evergreen Campus, where we will give an update of our progress, answer questions, and provide more information about how to become involved. Please come join us!

This article was originally published in the Cooper Point Journal.

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Kucinich withdraws, what now?

By Candace Milne

Kucinich, always on the right side of every issue

Recently I came across a Nov. 19, 2007 photo of Dennis Kucinich marching arm in arm with Father Bourgeois at the 18th annual protest at the School of the Americas at Ft Benning, Georgia. It reminded me of other photos I've seen of Dennis addressing thousands at anti-war rallies, on picket lines, on the streets of Seattle during the 1999 WTO protests and others. That's Dennis. In the streets with us. Speaking for us in Congress. Speaking for us in the Democratic Party debates. Always on the right side of every issue. Always working for the world we need and the world we want.

Dennis has always tried to turn our country away from empire-building, from Big Brother, from fascism and towards peace, jobs, justice, healthcare and democracy.

On the issue of Iraq he argued against going to war, dissected the War Powers Resolution that authorized the invasion, introduced legislation that would swiftly end the occupation and provide reparations to the Iraqi people, voted against all funding, exposed and denounced the privatization of the Iraqi oil industry, and held a Congressional hearing to highlight the Iraqi death toll.

On the issue of civil liberties he voted against the "USA Patriot Act", the "Military Commissions Act of 2006", and the more recent "Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007" while also introducing Articles of Impeachment against Cheney, and then Bush.

And on the health care crisis Kucinich co-authored H.R.676, the bill that would bring socialized healthcare to our country.

These are only a few of the issues Kucinich has raised and positions he has taken.

We who work for peace, multinational disarmament, a non-nuclear world, peace in Iraq, no war with Iran, justice for Palestinians, the restoration of our laws, impeachment of Bush and Cheney, healthcare-for-all, equal rights for Lesbians, Gays and Transgendered, fair trade, rebuilding our manufacturing base and infrastructure, a Green WPA program, an environmentally-friendly economic system, media reform, IRV, publicly funded campaigns, a secure Social Security System with retirement age set at 65, public education through college and peace and justice in general had the perfect candidate in Dennis Kucinich. He is one of the few candidates that are acceptable to us and he has been removed from the presidential field by the corporate media in cooperation with the corporatized Democratic Party.

What now?

As I write this Kucinich supporters across America are asking themselves this question, "What now?"

One thing we know for sure is that we must not lose this voice in Congress. Kucinich has been elected six times to his US Congressional seat for the 10th District in Ohio, but his victory in the primary this March 4 is far from certain. He faces four opponents and the corporations want him out. Donations are needed.

Another thing we know for sure is that we will caucus for him on February 9. Some of us will "caucus" and "convention" for Dennis as far as we can throughout the whole Democratic Party "delegate selection process" that will terminate in August at the Democratic Party National Convention.

I urge everyone to set aside this one afternoon to keep Dennis's message, our message alive. Kucinich's effect on the national discourse is inestimable. Keep it strong! In the event that your sign-in preference for Dennis does not translate into a delegate move into the "uncommitted" camp and run for the position of delegate there, supporters will be able to come together with other "uncommitted" Kucinich supporters at higher level conventions and will be able to "bargain" elements of Dennis' agenda into the Democratic Party platform.

On Feb. 9, some Kucinich supporters may move into either the camp of Obama or Edwards in order to push the candidate they find least objectionable forward. I personally do not take this ABC "Anyone but Clinton" stand. I have never supported the lesser of evils and I will not start now. I will sign in for Kucinich, give a one-minute speech in favor of Kucinich, lobby others to switch their sign-in preference to Kucinich and take it from there. I will not support Obama or Edwards.

The great lessons; what is next?

The great lessons of this campaign are that we need to work harder to move the corporations out of our media and our electoral processes as a prerequisite to getting them out of our government. Without comprehensive media reform, without publicly funded electoral campaigns, without public sponsored political debates we activists will never see the peace and justice we desire. Many Kucinich supporters will prioritize these issue as we transition from the Kucinich campaign into other venues for activism. We may work within Kucinich's new organization "Integrity Now" or we may work within existing organizations or both.

Another lesson (to some) is how thoroughly corporatized the Democratic Party is. Rather than creating a level playing field the Democratic National Committee and all leaders within the Democratic Party did nothing to ensure that all of the Democratic Party candidates were included in the debates and that all candidates were given equal time. They stood silently by while the MSM silenced Kucinich and Gravel. And in Washington State the Chair of the Washington State Democratic Party, Dwight Pelz, did his best to suppress the fact that Kucinich won an online poll conducted on the party's website. Faced with these facts some Kucinich supporters will, after the caucuses, cease to work within the Democratic Party while others will continue with attempts to reform it.

Another thing we know for sure is that we will caucus for Dennis Kucinich on February 9.

I personally will be moving from the Democratic Party into the Green Party to work on the campaign of Professor Gary Murrell who as a Green will be challenging Norm Dicks in the 6th Congressional District. Leaving the Grays Harbor Democrats will be very sad for me for these are my friends. I respect them deeply and have enjoyed working with them on many important issues.

I've campaigned for Dennis Kucinich since 2003. I am sorry he won't be our next President. I regard him as a great man with a far-reaching, humanitarian and holistic worldview. He has all the right policies. I'm sorry we lost him as a Presidential candidate. Let's keep him as a Congressman. And let's turn out on Feb. 9.

Candace Milne is a resident of Grays Harbor. For more information on Kucinich:

Congressional Campaign
www.kucinich.us

Presidential Campaign
www.dennis4president.com

Washington State Campaign
www.dennis4president.com/go/state-by-state/washington/

Kucinich's new organization
www.integritynow.org

Gary Murrell Campaign
www.garymurrell2008.com

Dennis Kucinich speaks outside Traditions Cafe at a 2007 event. Photo by Scott Yoos

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Cananea Mine Strike: Grupo Mexico wants canaries, not workers

by Anne Fischel and John Regan

In Cananea, Mexico, a major struggle for workers' rights and justice has been taking place for 6 months. Over 1300 copper miners, members of Section 65 of the Union of Mine, Metal and Allied Workers, are on strike against Grupo Mexico, the corporate giant who controls the Cananea mine. Since July, they have persistently asserted their rights to job safety and to worker and community health.

The Cananea copper mine is the largest in Mexico and one of the largest in the world. It was here, in 1906, that workers struck against a two-tiered wage policy that paid white workers more than Mexican workers. The mine's US owner sent for Arizona vigilantes and Mexican President Porforio Diaz sent federal troops to quell the strike. This event is widely known in Mexican history and is seen as the precursor to the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

For many years the mine was the property of the Mexican government, but in 1988 the government auctioned off many public resources, including the Cananea mine, which was acquired at bargain prices by Grupo Mexico.

Today, copper prices have soared to over $3 a pound. In the third quarter of 2007 Grupo Mexico reported a consolidated net quarterly income of $498.9 million, 27% higher than the previous year. In the same quarter, the company announced a new investment program in Peru and "suspended indefinitely" an investment program in Cananea, "due to lack of labor stability."

The miners have been on strike since July. They occupied the mine and resisted numerous attempts by the company and its political allies to declare the strike illegal. On Dec. 13, 2007 they won a legal victory when the Mexican Federal Court approved an injunction, or "amparo" protecting the legality of the strike. But on Jan. 11, the government declared the strike illegal. Hours later, 800 federal troops arrived in Cananea to oust the workers from the mine. Helicopters bombed the strikers with tear gas, and beat them with clubs. 20 miners were injured, some seriously, and miners and their families were arrested.

The next day the government reversed its position, declaring the union had a legal right to strike and that Grupo Mexico could not fire the workers. By then the company was in possession of the mine. At first, Grupo Mexico announced production would begin immediately and called on the miners to return to work. But when the workers refused, the company changed its tune, asserting it would conduct a three-month inspection of the plant to repair so-called damage created by the strikers. "All who wish to work will be welcomed back," said the company news release (broadcast repeatedly on Mexican radio and television).

Union members are holding out. Although US news services reported that 450 workers returned to work last week, the union estimates the number at less than 45. "They just added on a zero," joked one miner. The plant is eerily silent, with federal troops and police barricading the entrances. No one goes in or out without permission, and a steady stream of cars, driven by union activists, patrol the entrances to make sure the strike is holding.

We visited Cananea on Jan. 21 catching a bus from the US–Mexico border. The hour-long bus ride ended at a station in an industrial part of town. As we walked down Avenida Obregon a convoy of police cars passed us. We followed them down the hill to the old town, and found ourselves next to the union hall. There were at least a hundred workers near a bonfire which offered protection from the cold and another hundred inside the hall. We were warmly welcomed, and quickly ushered inside.

The miners are striking for safety and health. In October members of the Maquila Health and Safety Support Network conducted an inspection of the mine. They documented safety violations—workers exposed to silica dust which can cause silicosis and lung cancer. Dust collectors have been inoperable for years. Ventilation systems are inadequate, and accidents occur regularly. The report paints "a clear picture of a workplace being deliberately run into the ground. A serious lack of preventive maintenance, failure to repair equipment and correct visible safety hazards...has created a work site where workers have been exposed to high levels of toxic dusts and acid mists, operate malfunctioning and poorly maintained equipment, and work in ... dangerous surroundings." The report called for a massive clean up, a comprehensive health and safety remediation plan and extensive medical monitoring for all workers.

The miners want the company to remedy these long-standing threats to safety and health. They want good medical care for themselves and their families. Currently workers and their families receive company-funded medical care at the Hospital Ronquillo, an aging facility where miners complain that test results cannot be trusted. In 1999, the government and Grupo Mexico closed a well-equipped hospital which was funded by the company and administered by the union, the Clinica Obrera—leaving only the Hospital Ronquillo. "We are upholding our basic rights, guaranteed us by the constitution," said Sergio Tolano Lizarraga, Secretary-General of Section 65. "Our strike is nonviolent and legitimate. The violence of the soldiers was an offense to the workers and the whole community. All we want is to work safely and to care for our families. The company is supported by the government and the media. Journalists who tried to tell our story were threatened. We are determined, but we need support from international organizations."

An injured Cananea mine worker is taken for medical care. Photo by a miner.

One organization supporting the miners' strike is the United Steelworkers Union. The Steelworkers are the main union at the mines and smelter of Asarco, the American Smelting and Refining Company. Once an independent US company, Asarco was bought by Grupo Mexico in 1999. In 2005, Asarco declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy and its financial future is being determined by a court in Corpus Christi, Texas. In 2007, the court stripped Grupo Mexico of its control of Asarco and turned oversight of company operations over to a three-member board which includes Steelworkers District 12 Region Director, Terry Bonds. The two unions have signed solidarity agreements to support each other's struggles. The Steelworkers also filed a grievance under NAFTA, charging Mexico with undermining labor rights by prosecuting the president of the national union, Napolean Gomez, and trying to replace the militant miners union with a more compliant group. They want Grupo Mexico to accept responsibility for the deadly explosion at its Pasta de Conchos mine which killed 65 miners in 2006, an explosion Gomez called "industrial homicide." "This report of the Maquila Health and Safety Network should serve as a wake-up call to Grupo México," said Manuel Armenta, USW's District 12 Sub-Director. "We are trying to prevent another disaster like Pasta de Conchos."

As the price of copper rises to all-time highs, the unsolved issue of Grupo Mexico's responsibility to its workers and their community haunts this historic town. The workers will continue to press their demands. "Safety, respect, health," says Secretary-General Lizarraga. These are basic rights to which all workers are entitled. If the government does not protect our rights it is saying we are merely slaves to profit. That, we will never accept."

For more information about the Cananea strike, see the websites of photojournalist David Bacon (*dbacon.igc.org*) and the Maquila Health and Safety Support Network (*mhssn.igc.org/CananeaOHSReport.pdf*).

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State and federal workers occupy the mine and oust striking miners. Photo by a miner.